

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 42

INTRODUCED BY C. KAUFMANN

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING THAT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DESIGNATE AN APPROPRIATE INTERIM COMMITTEE OR DIRECT SUFFICIENT STAFF RESOURCES TO STUDY ALTERNATIVES FOR FUNDING THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION'S OVERALL FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, INCLUDING THE COSTS RELATED TO WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION.

~~WHEREAS, Montana has faced drought conditions for nearly a decade; and~~

WHEREAS, the population of Montana is increasing, and this increased population is beginning to inhabit areas that have historically been wildlands; and

WHEREAS, the costs associated with fire suppression and fire control increase dramatically when firefighters must protect homes and other structures; and

WHEREAS, the state currently relies on the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's normal general appropriations act funding and general fund money through a supplemental appropriation to pay for the costs associated with fire suppression; and

WHEREAS, it appears the state will continue to incur large expenses as a result of fire suppression; and

WHEREAS, the state does not have a funding system established, other than through a supplemental appropriation, to address the costs of fire suppression; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has recently received the final report from a private contractor who independently analyzed the Department's fire management program and identified inequities in how the program is currently funded.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to study the current statutes that establish and define the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's fire management program and source

1 of funding and recommend alternatives for funding:

2 (1) the Department's overall fire management program, including both the direct protection
3 program and the county assistance program; and

4 (2) the costs for fire suppression under both the direct protection program and the county
5 assistance program.

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT IF THIS STUDY OR THE STUDY REQUESTED BY HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION
7 NO. 21 IS ASSIGNED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THEN BOTH STUDIES SHOULD BE INCORPORATED TOGETHER AND
8 CONDUCTED JOINTLY.

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
10 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
12 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2002.

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
14 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 58th Legislature.

15 - END -